

Message Text

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FM AMEMBASSY LILONGWE

TO SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 1961

DIA WASHDC//AH-8// IMMEDIATE

C O N F I D E N T I A L LILONGWE 0853

LIMDIS

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: CVIS, PDIP, MI, OS (CHIWAYA, HENRY F)

SUBJ: DATT'S POSITION IN MALAWI--EMBASSY COMMENTS

REF: LILONGWE 837

1. IT MAY BE THAT THE GOM AS A WHOLE, INCLUDING PRESIDENT BANDA HIMSELF, WAS DISTURBED BY GENERAL MATEWERE'S PRECIPITOUS LETTER TO THE EMBASSY WHICH CALLED FOR THE DAO'S DEPARTURE. ONCE THE LETTER WAS DISPATCHED, HOWEVER, THERE WAS LITTLE HOPE THAT MATEWERE'S RECOMMENDATION WOULD BE RESCINDED EVEN IF (AS APPEARS TO BE THE CASE) WISER HEADS MIGHT HAVE PREVAILED INSIDE THE GOM.

2. CONSEQUENTLY, THE GOM BACKED AWAY FROM A CONFRONTATION BUT ACTED TO SAVE MATEWERE'S FACE. IT WAS INDEED SURPRISING THAT BANDA WOULD GO SO FAR AS TO INSTRUCT KACHINGWE AND MKANDAWIRE TO TELL ME THAT HE PERSONALLY "AGREED WITH AND APPROVED" THE CONTENTS OF OUR AIDE MEMOIRE. IT IS THEREFORE POSSIBLE THAT MATEWERE'S KNUCKLES HAVE BEEN RAPPED WHICH WOULD DOUBLE MATEWERE'S "EMBARRASSMENT": ONCE, AS HE TOLD US HIMSELF, BECAUSE OF THE VISA ISSUED TO CHIWAYA AND ONCE FOR HAVING GONE OUT OF NORMAL CHANNELS BY WRITING THE EMBASSY

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DIRECTLY AND FORCING BANDA'S HAND.

3. MERELY SAYING, AS THE GOM DID, THAT THE ISSUE IS NO LONGER A "GOVERNMENT-TO-GOVERNMENT" MATTER BUT IS ONE OF "PERSONAL RELATIONSHIPS" DOES NOT CHANGE THE GOVERNMENT-TO-GOVERNMENT ASPECT OF THE ISSUE, AND WE SHOULD NOT LET THEM SEE IT OTHERWISE. NONETHELESS, THE GOM HAS MADE A CONSIDERED GESTURE TOWARD US BY

ACTING TO AVOID FURTHER EXACERBATION OF THE CASE AND OUR BILATERAL RELATIONS. THE GOM, PARTICULARLY MATEWERE, QUESTIONS ABERNATHY'S FUTURE USEFULLNESS TO EITHER SIDE BUT IS ALLOWING COL. ABERNATHY TO DEPART AT HIS CONVENIENCE. WE SHOULD ATTEMPT TO DEFUSE THE ISSUE FURTHER BY KEEPING THE REAL ISSUE FROM THE PUBLIC SINCE FURTHER EMBARRASSMENT TO THE GOM OR MATEWERE CANNOT REDOUND TO OUR BENEFIT.

4. QUESTION OF COUSE IS WHAT STEPS IF ANY USG SHOULD TAKE.

5. BELIEVING THAT THE GOM HAS GONE AS FAR AS WE COULD HAVE HOPED, AND CERTAINLY FARTHER THAN EXPECTED, MY FEELING IS THAT WE SHOULD REFRAIN FROM ANY FURTHER REACTION WHICH OF COURSE WOULD HARM BILATERAL RELATIONS AND MIGHT UNNECESSARILY CAUSE SOME RESENTMENT BY UNINFORMED MALAWIANS TOWARDS THE U.S. WE MAY NOT HAVE MUCH TO LOSE, BUT WE WOULD HAVE NOTHING TO GAIN. WE SHOULD RENDER A RELATIVELY STRONG ORAL PROTEST EITHER HERE OR IN WASHINGTON SO THAT THE GOM CANNOT WRITE THE THE ISSUE OFF SO EASILY. THIS PROTEST SHOULD STRESS THE GOVERNMENT-TO-GOVERNMENT ASPECT OF THE SUGGESTION THAT ABERNATHY DEPART AND SHOULD REITERATE THAT HE COULD NOT IN ANY EVENT BE HELPD RESPONSIBLE FOR WHAT IS A DEPARTMENT OF STATE MATTER DURING THE COURSE OF WHICH HE ACTED ONLY UNDER THE EXPLICIT INSTRUCTIONS OF THE AMBASSADOR.

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6. IF WASHINGTON BELIEVES AN ADDITIONAL STEP SHOULD BE TAKEN IN REACTION TO THE DAO'S DEPARTURE, I OFFER THE FOLLOWING: (A) A STIFF NOTE OF PROTEST, WHETHER MADE PUBLIC OR NOT; (B) SIGNIFICANT DELAY OF ASSIGNMENT OF NEW DAO (WHICH WOULD DEPEND ANYWAY ON HOW SOON DIA COULD RECRUIT A REPLACEMENT); (C) A CUT-BACK IN SELF-HELP FUNDS FOR FY-79; OR (D) IF THE TWO AID PROJECTS (NRDP AND POLYTECHNIC) ARE IN FACT APPROVED BY AID/W, DELAYING THE IMPLEMENTATION OF ONE OR BOT OF THEM FROM FY-79 TO FY-80

7. THE PROS AND CONS OF THE FOUR ABOVE OPTIONS SHOULD BE SELF-EVIDENT. I DO NOT BELIEVE ANY OF THEM ARE NECESSARY. I COULD HAVE ADDED THE PNGING OF A MALAWIAN EMBASSY OFFICIAL IN NEW YORK OR WASHINGTON OR A DELAY IN THE ARRIVAL OF A NEW U.S. AMBASSADOR TO MALAWI, BUT SUCH STEPS IN MY ESTIMATION WOULD BE FAR TOO SEVERE AND WOULD UNNECESSARILY CREATE RESENTMENT AMONG MALAWIANS WHERE NONE NOW EXISTS. INJUDICIOUS RETALIATION WOULD BE PATENTLY UNDESIRABLE
SHEINBAUM

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